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Northern Review

of Writing and the Arts in Canada

ENGLISH ISSUE

First Printing of

- **STORIES BY**

  WILLIAM SANSOM AND FRED URQUHART

- **POEMS BY**

  NORMAN NICHOLSON, JAMES KIRKUP, VERNON WATKINS, NORMAN CAMERON AND OTHERS

- **A SELECTION FROM DON JUAN,**

  A PLAY BY RONALD DUNCAN

Co-Editor of This Issue: Norman Levine

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Continuing *THE CANADIAN REVIEW OF MUSIC AND ART, PREVIEW* and *FIRST STATEMENT.*

Contributors to this Issue

WILLIAM SANSOM. One of England's leading writers. His most recent novel is THE FACE OF INNOCENCE, (The Hogarth Press).

KEITH DOUGLAS. He was killed in Normandy at the age of 24. After his death *Horizon* summed up his stature in these words. "Among the younger men, Keith Douglas stands alone. He is the only poet who has written poems comparable with the works of the better poets of the last war and likely to be read as war poems when the war is over." Editions Poetry London have recently published his COLLECTED POEMS.

NORMAN CAMERON. Besides being a poet, he is recognized as one of the best translators of French poetry. His translations of Rimbaud have already appeared, and the poems in this issue are shortly to be published in a book entitled POEMS BY FRANCOIS VILLON by Jonathan Cape.

RONALD DUNCAN. Poet and dramatist. His plays include THIS WAY TO THE TOMB, STRATTON and OUR LADY'S TUMBLER. The selection in this issue is from his new play, DON JUAN. Faber have published a selection of his poems entitled, THE MONGREL.

FRED URQUHART. Born in Edinburgh in 1912. Has published 3 novels and 6 books of short stories. His most recent novel is entitled JEZEBEL'S DUST (Methuen). His collections of short stories include, THE YEAR OF THE SHORT CORN, and, THE LAST G.I. BRIDE WORE TARTAN. He has just won the Tom-Gallon Trust Award for 1952/53.

VERNON WATKINS. A Welsh poet. His volumes include THE BALLAD OF THE MARI LWYD, THE LAMP AND THE VEIL, and, THE LADY WITH THE UNICORN. All published by Faber & Faber.

JAMES KIRKUP. His latest volume, THE SUBMERGED VILLAGE (Oxford University Press) has aroused much critical interest. Considered one of the better young poets writing in England today.

NORMAN NICHOLSON. Lives in Cumberland. A well known Faber poet. His books include FIVE RIVERS, THE OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAINS, and, ROCK FACE.

W. S. GRAHAM. A young poet from Scotland. His volume THE WHITE THRESHOLD (Faber & Faber) revealed a writer with an admirable control of technique.

Two Stories

William Sansom

A COMMUNICATION

My uncle lived in a black and white house in a wet green dell. Black timbers, black as trees in the rain, held together plaster white as dry chalk: and on either side there rose steeply banked the fields of high green grass. There were no flowers. Only green, and against it the black and the white.

In one green paddock my uncle kept a black and white cow, which stood all day in the field declaring its camouflage sharp against the green. It was a coincidence that my uncle was also a cleric, and although very poor, and very old, kept his white collar shining clean and black suit brushed. He was so old, or he had drifted so long in the shadow of his prayers, that his face and his bald head were quite white too.

So you see how it was, when I spent that lonely dull June with my uncle. Confined for hours to my chair in the garden, I could only stare at this endless green and at these several incursions of black and white. Incursions! They were more stances, declamations, eruptions caught in the act. How freshly young green shines under a low white sky! How still the house and the cow stood, how slowly across the green lawn my uncle moved on his old black legs!

I sat there trying to remember how a flower looked, or a blue sky. I played with coloured picture books, I looked for a long time at my own pink hand. But the others — the green and the black and the white were too powerful, they were everywhere, with the sun glowing bright as a medical lamp behind its lens of white cloud. You will know something of what must have come over me that afternoon with my uncle.

I had begun by then to theorize. At one time I began thinking how black and white were not colours, not colours at all isolated in this way before me: and that this green, this green with a light inside

it was almost not a colour too, it was vegetable force, it was green life breeding and shining and creeping in its tendrils all about. And what is needed, I thought — I thought . . . and suddenly I began to study my uncle's face more intently: and with wonder.

He was standing a few yards away, standing in thought. I looked him carefully up and down — his black suit had shape to it, I saw where parts of him protruded and parts fell cavernously in. I saw his white collar, and his white wrinkled neck above it. I saw his old face, moveless in thought — its curdled paste of skin, its eyes blank beneath heavy lids of his dark old age, its moulding of bone and its white pouches sagging like sacs out of spirit jars, and the benign white dome new-born above.

All at once I realized — this man is full of red! Inside he's red!

You know — I tried hard to forget this. I invented games — rigmaroles of paper and pencil, countings and postures — to divert that thought. I took more exercise than was permitted, I limped hard for periods excessively long — in order that the very pain in my foot might relieve this new pain in my mind. I tried to wheedle my way into the dark of the house, from which I was soon ejected — for the doctors had prescribed not only rest but air — by my uncle himself: himself, so that in that way too I was brought face to face in too literal a manner with my thought. But soon even at night, in bed, in the dark, far from the green and the black and the white, I lay awake thinking only of the red.

Such matters must find their outlet.

And one afternoon I could no longer bear it, strong passions seized me, I determined to root the red out of that black and white old man: and I went for him with the breadknife.

It is curious to see that this happened inside in the dining-room, to be exact. Not out in the green at all. So that at least must prove that the thought had grown stronger than its cause. And curious too, that I could realize easily, as with a second mind, the ordinary still nature of the room in which this happened. The dark overmantle of the sideboard with its single apple in a bowl: the sense of time hanging over our lonely cold luncheon: the calm light, dusting old fabrics, old framed photographs fading into the wall. And if anyone thinks that life in such circumstances changes — brightens, or disappears, or unbalances itself — they are wrong. It remains the same: only, more noticeably the same.

I was standing behind uncle, by the breadboard. His head was nodding at his cold mutton — as if he were talking to it: or talking to the pieces, for he always chopped his food first and then took the fork in his right hand. I remember so well his right hand with the fork raised; and his other hand stretched out on the tablecloth to the left, crumbling a piece of bread. Old people can eat with such indifference, with all tired time to spare — perhaps to spin the precious dining hours longer.

He was reflected in a mirror opposite, though his head was bowed, and I could not see his face. I did not really want to. I took the knife suddenly from the bread — it was in the middle of cutting a slice — and in the second I held it over him, pointed like a dagger, I saw that it was one with saw-edges. So with a certain pleasure, certainly with excitement, yet with the utmost careful concentration, I placed the blade exactly along the centre of his clean white dome and began to saw.

At the first touch my uncle reached a little forward, as though he had fallen asleep, or as though he had noticed some black fly on his white plate which surprised him. I suppose really, that was the moment he died: his heart would have come to a stop.

I went on sawing — it was no easy matter, I knew that from the beginning, and already I had to steady the head with my left hand. But I persisted, and watched with some impatience. Yet disappointment. For at first there was indeed a pinkiness, but then it all became a mess, you could have called none of it red, certainly not in the light of that old room, certainly not the red I was after.

But then — as soon as I looked at it, and looked up again in my helpless disappointment, and in doing so saw my movement in the mirror opposite, the mirror set in the great dark sideboard — my heart again bounded with joy! I saw hope, I saw the bright end to all misfortune !

I ran stumbling round the chairs, I could hear them falling behind me like fragments of a past life, and standing before the mirror I cut my throat.

It was lovely. The red came bounding out to meet my thankful eyes, it came so easily, so brightly, so bravely blazing its colour that in simple admiration I had to stop. I stopped, with my throat half only cut, for there was no need for more. I sank to my knees, sobbing thankfulness, and through hands clasped in a sort of prayer, I looked again.

But now there was no mirror! I saw only the black wooden face of the sideboard, I was down on the carpet. It was appalling. But then I realized that I had not really been robbed, I was just on my knees below the mirror. However, so that it might never happen again I got to my feet — it was beginning to hurt now dreadfully — and with a last glad glance in the mirror I stumbled out through the doors onto the green. And away down to the garden gate, to the lane, my hands so richly red against the green and with the memory of my lovely red throat. And, you know, I was so glad it was *mine.*

I suppose it was this, sudden bright red, that so unsettled the foresters coming down the hill towards me. I am sorry they were so obviously put out, and I have little doubt they who had their lives always among the green may have been dazzled quite hurtfully at the sight of all my red.

For now, when I am quieter, and in my new grey home, I can see that such matters can be overdone, too much is too much: and now I can even find great and subtle pleasure in the colour, the blueness shining from what may be first thought black, of the uniforms of my new friends with their priestly blue domes.

PAS DE DEUX

THOSE two moved apart, yet always they came closer together.

Walls of grey, floor black — the pale walls fell with draped precision straight to meet the floor, a parquet smooth and deep as black water. All the vast place — a ballroom, a wide eurhythmeum? — lay empty: no mirror broke the silence. Only on one side the solitude stood open to light, perhaps to a skyshaft for the dead moonlight — certainly some pale light, like the light from a waning moon, or like the light of a northern afternoon that sheds a statis through high curtainless windows, certainly some such light watered and cleansed in delicate mist the precision of walls and floors, of black and grey. It seemed to dream an unplayed music about the air: yet more truly such music could have been played only within the two slowly moving, lonely figures.

Far apart, doll-shadows dwarfed in the immense perspective, they moved — yet made no progress. Both it seemed moved within them-

selves, concerned only with the intimacy of their own feelings. Yet already they must have sensed each other, two such solitary presences must by the silence and the great grave space be drawn in time together.

He, close to the pale wall, his curious short arms held jutting from his breast, arms placed close together, and now appealing as if to offer some sharp-boned pigeon breast that lay between them — he stood in secret colloquy with the wall itself. Entranced, he tapped it. With head bowed listening to something within him, he stood and tapped. But rather than tapping the wall, it became clear that it was himself he was tapping by means of the wall. Thoughtfully thus, but with mounting excitement, his long dark-clothed legs braced, each limb tensed in outline by the wall's pallor, he made his small movement. And that movement, effortful but to no known direction, decisive as the contour of his body close-wrapped in dark naked silhouette — that movement was the intimate exercise of a dancer for ballet. As though he clung to a bar and practised the ply of tendons, now prising an arc from the leg, now bending a faceless body. For such dancers at their practice move with eyes turned inwards, they look into themselves, they move nowhere, they perform only for the interior theatre of their perception those motions over and over, again and ever again. No one can know what unseen muscles play: and no one may enquire — for to that plying figure no world exists and thus no one exists, and how then could one enquire ? Such figures dance within themselves: and this one, profoundly, tapped.

But in fact, at that pale-lit time in the extensive ballroom, the solitary practicer endured no practice but the real dance. And thus it was that some time later as the colloquy developed its mysterious way, he found what he sought — and into his thinking hand there dropped from the dark contour of his body one single water-clear jewel. No more. For an instant passing into light it gave its glint — then it was snatched up by the withered little arm. And this arm then, and its fellow with it, those two arms squat like clubended wounded arms extended themselves rigid to their full half-length in front of his upper chest, in front of his throat — and thus erected, stayed. Then he moved away from the wall, and began to stalk slowly down the great polished floor. Alone, searching — but always blindly forced towards the other further figure crouched waiting away in a distant corner.

Drawn into her shadowless refuge, she waited where two walls intersected. From there she could not see what figure approached — but with some sort of a small deep shudder she sensed the approach.

In that emptiness something was moving, nothing the eyes could define but a something moving against the stillness otherwise. She crouched into the corner, her back against the angle, her legs and arms outstretched like a boxer against the ropes. She pressed back, yet she lounged. And from her dark fertile beauty there shone the alert moving question of two eyes. They alone really moved. Hard like diamonds, their light refracted the pale bright mist. They slewed with lunatic unrest, eager and fearful, sure of something but unsure what it might be. No other movement. Back-spread into the corner she only waited, all nerve and muscle held tense for movement. But despite her strange fear a deep yearning started somewhere near her heart, her stomach.

And he travelling now out in midfloor, strutting always nearer to her — he had yet no knowledge of where she might be. The light, misted, made up of a million pale flecks, engaged him. The precision of dark and pale was his only field. But scarcely wavering he kept his straight and beautiful walk, his firm perambulation of search. He moved his legs surely, with precise movement, feeling with a delicacy of ceremonial tread the floor with first his foot and then all the muscle of his long striding leg. On thus and nearer he came ever nearer to her crouching taut as a madwoman in her corner of safety.

He saw her. He stopped instantly: halted himself: jerked entranced: stayed astounded beyond the sense that had brought him there. With such surety he had approached — yet when he found her he was amazed! And simultaneously there crept through his body both a warm draught of desire and the great cold allertion. He stopped still. Then, slowly raising his short arms higher and always higher so that they reached above his eyes, he allowed himself to gaze on her loveliness. On her fine limbs thus stretched out on the walls, on the darkness of her blood-warm body — no sylphide frailty, this one was dark, brown and eager, her full shape hard with muscle yet moulded over with the female softness: large and in poised tension of great fine grace. But still only her eyes moved, and these now only in their light, for they stared straight and motionless, only letting a moving light shine from them, a light that at first might have been madness bu now shone fiercely as a light of hunger.

He knew he must approach no further. What possessed her was too dangerous to disturb. And thus to reassure, to show his love for her, to woo away that rigid mood he raised himself abruptly to his toes, so that his legs became straight, so that like poised rods they rose from the floor — and then slowly, graciously, he began to dance, to

and fro, to and fro, swaying, lilting, pointing endazzling. He danced the dance of himself a dance of exhibition. And as in the queer light she saw his figure so darkly silhouetted, of so much wooing male shape — as she watched such a courteous splendid music of movement the hunger left her eyes and a softer glaze of lulled fascination took its place. Her arms relaxed their spring, an opiate seemed to take her. To and fro, to and fro he danced — and as time went on she lost herself in his movement. And grew no more afraid when in his traversing he grew closer, quite close.

Nothing then could stop what happened. In one long lunging leap he was on her, arcked and swift as the black sweep of a scimitar: and gripped, embraced, with clublike hand he plunged the jewel deep into the folds of her body.

Only for a moment, for a sharp moment — but perhaps to those two embraced a long dream beyond time — they stayed thus enclenched. And then again that cold allertion came warning through his body, chilling swiftly the warm desirous fog — but not swift enough. Already with abrupt vicious strength she had wrenched a new grip on him, declenched and clenched with metal surety, and her mouth was at his stomach, tearing into the tissue and drawing in great mouthfuls of his powerless dying sustenance.

In the morning she was again crouched back in her corner, again the tense boxer, again roving with hunger. He, thrown to the edge of the web, lay awkward and useless, no more now than a feeble trellice of lifeless legs.

NORMAN NICHOLSON

AS TREES WALKING

The rough light rasps my eyes.
These that were soft as plums for my fingertips to touch,
Fleshing in pupil-pulp the hard stones of their blindness,
Now have the skin scraped off them. If this is sight,
This jangle and tangle and jumble and jerk,
What's the gain to the seeing ? Only to be
A rat at a rubbish dump with a cartload of rubble
Tipped on your back, an avalanche of ashes
With neither shape nor sense. They give me an orange:
I feel its roundness, the aromatic
Half-sticky rumples of the rind, the rosette of dry fibre
Where the fruit was snapped from the stalk — the light
Has the even sting of acid. They put a scarf in my hands —
A red scarf as they call it — I feel its animal
Hairiness, kittening and knotting — and the light
Is hot and steady as a gas-fire. They hold out a mirror,
Saying: 'Look at yourself, man. Look !' — and now
The light's not there at all.
When voices speak

They come from nowhere and from no-one.
There's nothing in the world I can put a name to;
There's neither here nor there. I cannot recognize
The very hands I feel with — they merge and disappear
In the unintelligible other-ness of light.
I have to shut my eyes to know where I am,
To find the divide between not — me and me;
I have to be blind again to see.

The boiling slowly dies;
The light lies still.
My fingers teach my eyes.
Day by month by year

I learn the near and far,
The three-point and the four-point
Of triangle and square.
I grope to grip the line
That loops in like a string
The substance of a thing,
The There from the Not-There —
The edge, the rim of the glass
In where the simmering light
Drips and sets and stands;
The round green glass of apple,
The bulbous brown of pear,
I lift them to my sight
And the colour spills on my hands.

My eye-holes now grow fingers,
My lids stick out their tongues.
Round and smooth is red,
Rough and pointed, green.
And my tongue strokes the pointed,
My fingers chew the smooth,
And seen, seen, seen,
In a new sense of a new sense,
Are damson-leaf and damson,
Water and butter and bread,
Table and chair and bed,
Hearth and home and hand,
Seen, seen, seen,
With a new touch of a new tongue,
As if music had a scent,
Or the taste of peppermint
Were a twinkle in the ear.
And all of it early as dew
To my not-mine, not-paid-for,
Experimental view;
For all wives are virgin,
And all eggs fresh-laid,
And every finch a pheasant,
And every pin, new.

JAMES KIRKUP

THE ABANDONED HARBOUR

Oceans are steeple-deep beyond the bank
Of sand that was the harbour mouth,
And half a town lies now beneath
The roadstead where no ships may ride.
Along the crumbling dunes, the lank
Sea-lavender is blown and bleached
By salt and wind in one unending tide
That scours the ruins where a boat is beached
And broken, the shattered oars
Cast with a rotted lifebelt on the shingle floors.

Out of the waves of sand, a chimney rises,
And the ribbed back of a slateless roof,
Where, if you walk, your feet are half
Sunk in the sand-packed lofts of upper rooms.
The cliffs, where crippled church and houses
Crawl down the winters to the foundered
Edge of time, reveal the shafts of wells, dead dreams
Of sweet water that once fountained from the plundered
Graveyards of the deep. Among the rocks
Clatter the skulls of fallen cemeteries, and a coffin knocks.

Behind, the land is vast and desolate, and desolate and vast
The heavens' inanition. A distant lighthouse
Buries its yellowed candle in the marsh; no mouse
Or comfortable mole works here: only the white birds
Calling on the emptiness of a forgotten past
Welcome the solitary wanderer. But even vaster,
And more desolate, the sea, two heaving thirds
Of space, hangs on the high horizon, the master
Whose indifference broke more than our intentions ever break.
A ship, far off, sails in another world; but what harbour can
its lost survivors make ?

VERNON WATKINS

Two Poems

A MAN WITH A FIELD

If I close my eyes I can see a man with a load of hay
Cross this garden, guiding his wheelbarrow through the copse
To a long, low green-house littered with earthenware, glass and clay,
Then prop his scythe near the sycamore to enter it, potted with seeds,
And pause where chrysanthemums grow, with tomatoes' dragonish beads.
Stooping to fasten the door, he turns on the path which leads
To his rain-pitted bedroom of cellos, and low jugs catching the drops.

If I open my eyes I see this musician-turned-ploughman, slow,
Plainly follow his tractor vibrating beneath blue sky,
Or cast his sickle wide, or reach full-length with the hoe,
Or blame the weather that set its blight on a crop or a plan
To mend his roof, or cut back trees where convolvolus ran,
Or attend to as many needs as the holes in a watering-can:
He would wait for the better weather; it had been a wet July.

This year his field lay fallow; he was late putting down his seed.
Cold December concealed with a sighing surplice of snow
His waste of neglected furrows, overgrown with mutinous weed.
Dark, bereaved like the ground, I found him feeble and sick,
And cold, for neither the sticks nor his lamp with a shrunken wick
Would light. He was gone through the wicket. His clock continued to tick,
But it stopped when the new flakes clustered on an empty room below.

A HOUSE WITH A SEE-SAW.

Here nothing fits:
The timbers have slits,
No thread on the screws,
The hatchet-head loose.
Old fire-logs are knotted.
Sea-winds have rotted
The hinge of the gate.
One destitute grate
Has dropped from its socket.
I had but to knock it
In clearing the flues
Of the thick-crusted chimney
For bricks to come loose
Like a slag-tip from Rhymney.

The noise of soot falling,
The nest of a starling:
I couldn't keep pace
With the avalanche started
Till all the cold clinkers
The coal-man had carted
Had dropped in my face.
And in the grass plot,
That heaven for tinkers
Behind the back wall,
No saucepan or pot
Or basin or bowl
But has a big hole
Where the water runs out.

There nettles grow tall
And buttercups sprout.
Saucers cracked wider
Than webs of a spider
Are lost in long grass.
One dead I hear pass
To the shed that is rocking
With iron shards knocking

On boards where ferns root,
And the old water-shoot
Has slipped from its bracket.
All night there's a racket
Like a dog with a goose
Of the door that flies loose.

Those high shelves are tumbling
With concert-scores crumbling
And papers in lots.
Through broken flower-pots
Convolvolus rambles
Up roses and brambles
To a stanchion that creaks;
And where the roof leaks
And the bath-tiles begin,
Near a window made fast
Since a gale knocked it in,
Like a derelict mast
A water-pipe pushes
Near blackcurrant bushes

Its head that leans over
The lead water-tank,
But lost in deep clover
Or some grassy bank
Is the handle that tapped it.
Yet now we're adapted
To all that is mossed
Or missing or lost,
To all that confuses
With fugitive uses
This house that is crooked
Since Father Time shook it:
A see-saw has changed
The spoiled and deranged.

Here everything fits:
Here the tom-tits
Tap at the pane

Again and again
For crumbs on the plate
When breakfast is late.
When icicle weather
Holds all things together
All night the flakes fall
And fastening the wall
Contract and grow harder
With frost, while the larder
Is locked against mice
Creeping in with the ice.

When we wake from long dozing
And look through the panes
The ponies stand frozen
With snow in their manes.
As our fire-logs are finished
The stock is replenished
By a sea-gully good
That's littered with wood.
On Sunday I fetch it
To chop with the hatchet.
We draw fire with paper
And make the flames caper,
And keep the door felted
While butter is melted.

No heat must be lost
As the white bread we toast;
Then, when all is ready,
The shimmer unsteady
On plate, knife or cup
Throws the first sunbeam up
To dance on the ceiling,
Sharp sunrise revealing
A bone's gristly string
The greedy tits cling,
The wall-shadowed plunder
Their talons swing under,

Each bird in succession
Regaining possession.

When the sun gains in power,
Leaf opens, and flower;
No rift or projection
Then seems imperfection,
No bracket or brace,
No perch out of place,
But all yield their inches
To sparrows and finches.
In May every hair
Like a feather shines fair;
The buckets with holes
Make neat, shallow bowls,
And the blackbird preens wings
Where the water-pipe flings

Its shade in the butt.
Whether open or shut,
This house is made richer
By every cracked pitcher,
By all that ran out
Through the long water-spout.
How tell the amount in
Which each is in debt ?
We live by the fountain
That first made us wet.
This house that leaned over
Is made to recover
Its peace by a thread
That is true to its dead.

W. S. GRAHAM

SONG

(For The Castle Wall)

Then what a fine upstander
I was for the cause of Love
And what a great woman's
Man I went sauntering as.

I could sing a tear out of
The drunk or sober or deaf.
My love would lie pleasanter
Than any love before.

But she who younger lay
Lies lost in the husk of night.
My far my vanished dears
All in your bowers.

From DON JUAN

Ronald Duncan

Act 2. Scene 1.

The next day.
DONA ANA's cell at the convent. It is not Gothic. She is reading when the ABBESS ENTERS.

DONA ANA *(Rising)*
Reverend Mother . . .
ABBESS Did you not hear me come in?
DONA ANA No, Mother.
ABBESS Such concentration is unusual;
When I see it, I suspect that it is prompted by despair.
What are you reading?
DONA ANA *"The Life of Saint Jerome"*
ABBESS Yes . . . he took a vow not to read poetry, didn't he?
Quite a contemporary figure . . .
But I have something important to say to you.
My child, your father, Don Gonzalo
Asked to see me yesterday.
Did he not say anything to you himself?
DONA ANA No . . .
ABBESS I see; he left it entirely to me.
They usually do. Men are as afraid of their daughters
As they are of their conscience . . .
My child, your father wishes you to take
Your final vows to-days.
Pause.
Did you hear me? Do you understand?
Most novitiates break down when they
Come to be professed. It is a kind of modesty
All women shew when they become brides . . .
DONA ANA I am ready.
ABBESS Brides of Christ or brides of men.
DONA ANA I do understand. I am ready.

ABBESS None of us are ready. Some of us
Leave the world more willingly than others;
But none of us are ready. And those
Who've been hurt most by the world
Seem to find most difficulty in leaving it.
DONA ANA But for me it's a release.
ABBESS Which is not the same thing as a vocation.
I know how fond you are of your father,
I know you will want to please him. But in this
You must obey no man.
DONA ANA It is my decision, not my father's,
It was I who persuaded him.
My mind is made up.
ABBESS You mean your heart is . . .
My child , I'm sorry, for though I will be glad
For you to be received, I had hoped that the unhappiness
Which made you seek refuge here
Would, in time, disappear and that in time
You would return to the world and . . .
DONA ANA Marry?
ABBESS Yes, if not the man you love
Perhaps someone who loves you.
DONA ANA That is not for me.
ABBESS Can nothing dissuade you?
DONA ANA No, I've longed for this, desperately.
ABBESS It is that desperation which worries me . . .
As you know, this girdle is wound three times
And is tied with a single knot.
There is the vow of poverty . . . You smile?
Yes, coming from a great family that will be easy
— You'll appreciate the luxury of having nothing . . .
Next, the vow of obedience. That too will be easy,
Being a great soldier's daughter you'll merely
Transfer to me the loyalty you have shewn to him . . .
And this is the girdle of chastity.
DONA ANA That will be easiest of all.
ABBESS Is it?
It's in our desires we sin. Nuns can be wanton
In their thoughts, whores more chaste when they give
themselves

Not from passion, but out of pity.
Do you understand?

DONA ANA It will be easy for me to renounce those pleasures I never knew.

ABBESS No, harder for the very reason
You did not know them . . . But here's your nurse.

ENTER Dona Ana's NURSE carrying a large book.

ABBESS Make your final preparations. She will pray with you. — What have you there?

NURSE A book, Reverend Mother.

ABBESS That much I had perceived. But what book?

NURSE *(Handing it to her)*
The Book of the Hours. It's a present from Don Gonzalo
To Dona Ana.

ABBESS Appropriate, but hardly imaginative . . .
(She puts the book down. To Dona Ana)
Is there nothing more to say.

DONA ANA No, Reverend Mother.

ABBESS Then I will send for you later.
SHE GOES.

NURSE Aren't you going to look at your present?

DONA ANA Not now.

NURSE Don Gonzalo will be disappointed.
Look how well it's bound . . .
She hands the book to DONA ANA, who doesn't open it and is about to put it down.
. . . and illustrated too.
DONA ANA opens the book. A letter falls out.

DONA ANA What's that? *(The Nurse hands it to her)*
Did you know that this was here?
Answer me!

NURSE Catalion begged me to bring it to you.

DONA ANA *(Throwing the letter down)* I will not read it.

NURSE Don Juan is back. He's here in Seville . . .

DONA ANA I know. My father warned me of that last night.

He need not have worried. Judging by Don Juan's adventures
He will have forgotten my name.

NURSE That's why he wrote to you as soon as he returned?

DONA ANA *(Walking round the letter)*
I suppose I'm a kind of challenge to him.
It seems he forgets those girls he enjoys
And only remembers those who remained
Beyond his reach. His memory will not be burdened.

NURSE You know he loves you.

DONA ANA *(Walking away from the letter)*
And I thank God my father refused to let us marry.
Don Juan is nothing but a common adventurer,
An amoral atheist whose only purpose
Is to pursue his own pleasure. Whose only faith
Is his self-conceit . . .

NURSE " . . . and intolerable arrogance!"
You've learned your lesson well. I could almost hear your father speaking

DONA ANA I tell you, I've learned to hate him!

NURSE We cannot learn to hate or learn to love.

DONA ANA *(Standing over letter)*
But we can forget. If he's not forgotten me,
I have forgotten him.

NURSE So I see. And now as he means nothing to you
Why don't you read his letter?

DONA ANA That's true . . . Give it to me.
(She reads the letter)
"Let me ask you one question
And I will never ask another:
Do I *walk* through your dreams
As you now *run* through mine?
Answer this question. I will not ask another.
Don Juan."
(Pause)
Yes . . .

NURSE Is there an answer?

DONA ANA *(Not hearing her)*
Yes, yes !

NURSE Shall I take it to him?

DONA ANA What? No, there is no answer.

KEITH DOUGLAS (1920-1944)

Four Poems

FAREWELL POEM

Please, on a day falling in summer,
recall how being tired, you and I
among the idle branches by the river
and blind to propriety and passers-by,
where leaves like eyes turn sidelong to the river,
fell asleep embraced and let the shades run
half crossing us, and half the vigorous sun,
till he had almost climbed enough.

Because tired, what innocents we were
protected by sleep you see we had not thought,
like a footprint before we were aware,
that day was complete behind us and wiped out:
so watch us broken apart and not aware,
keep prisoner pain and talk wry stuff.

Who is it that is pleased now we are sad,
who is satisfied and thanks his stars,
has got and has the happiness we had ?
Will he enjoy long, or will the sudden alas,
and sorrow the light-fingered fellow pick his heart ?
Of course: soon his misery will start,
for all delight is God's impermanent bluff.

In a minute he will come from the gold cloud,
the great black figure with a hideous laugh,
and hear the comfortable cry aloud:
the ethereal veil is cracked painted lath,
and he will be backed with fires and the red cloud.
We must never touch and start our story again;
for God is waiting with unexpended pain
and will not bless you my dark afflicted love.

Oxford, 1940.

TIME EATING

Ravenous Time has flowers for his food
in Autumn, yet can cleverly make good
each petal: devours animals and men,
but for ten dead he can create ten.

If you enquire how secretly you've come
to mansize from the smallness of a stone
it will appear his effort made you rise
so gradually to your proper size.

But as he makes he eats; the very part
where he began, even the elusive heart,
Time's ruminative tongue will wash
and slow juice masticate all flesh.

That volatile huge intestine holds
material and abstract in its folds:
thought and ambition melt and even the world
will alter, in that catholic belly curled.

But Time, who ate my love, you cannot make
such another; you who can remake
the lizard's tail and the bright snakeskin
cannot, cannot. That you gobbled in
too quick, and though you brought me from a boy
you can make no more of me, only destroy.

Wickwar, Glos, 1941.

I LISTEN TO THE DESERT WIND

I listen to the desert wind
that will not blow her from my mind;
the stars will not put down a hand,
the moon's ignorant of my wound

moving negligently across
by clouds and cruel tracts of space
as in my brain by nights and days
moves the reflection of her face.

Skims like a bird my sleepless eye
the sands who at this hour deny
the violent heat they have by day
as she denies her former way:

all the elements agree
with her, to have no sympathy
for my tactless misery
as wonderful and hard as she.

O turn in the dark bed again
and give to him what once was mine
and I'll turn as you turn
and kiss my swarthy mistress pain.

Wadi Natrun, 1942.

I WATCH WITH INTEREST, FOR THEY ARE GHOSTS

I

I watch with interest, for they are ghosts,
shaken by their fealty to the past
into a mood of sorrow and veneration
and with the hand of pity at my eyes
their gestures, those in their rich lifetime were
the mark of their nobility and merit.
Support and picture in their proper gear
these skeletons of conversation falling
from the lips of a nobleman or king
while still we recall what nobles and kings were.

II

As I watch each closely — for they are ghosts
and grow invisible before our eyes
I feel the hand of pity on my heart
shaken by their fealty to the past. Look,
their gestures. These in their rich lifetime bore
the mark of their nobility and pride.
Can you apparel in their proper gear
these skeletons of conversation falling
from the lips of a dead nobleman or king
while still we know what nobles and kings were.

London, 1944.

The Last Sister

Fred Urquhart

For over twenty years Hutcheon, the grieve's daughters, one after the other, had been maids at the Mill of Burnhill. First there had been Mary, who had come as a gawky child of fourteen. She was there six years, and by the time she had left to get married she had her sister Sarah well trained to take her place. In her turn Sarah left to get married, but Bella stepped into her shoes. And then after Bella came Nell and Nanny and Jean and Agnes. Mrs. Crichton, the farmer's wife, had always hoped that Agnes would not follow her sisters, but after seven years Agnes decided to get married, too. And now Norma, the last sister, had come to be maid.

Mrs. Crichton had often wondered what she would do after the "last" sister. Whom would she get so well trained, so dependable ? For she had needed to train only the first sister. Each of the following sisters had been trained by the sister immediately in front of her. As children each of them had had the run of the house and had seen how things were done and knew everything long before it was her turn to pack her kist and bring it from the grieve's cottage and cart it up the narrow wooden stairs to the small room above the scullery.

Mrs. Crichton had had misgivings about Norma ever since she was a small, snottery-nosed child peering fearfully in the back door. Mrs. Hutcheon had been well into middle-age when she'd had her, and there was a space of nine years between her and Agnes. Norma's birth had been a surprise to everybody, even to Mrs. Hutcheon herself. At the time, Bella, the third sister, was maid in the farm-house, and Mrs. Crichton had said: "And what 'll yer mother be callin' this one, I wonder ? I doubt she'll have run out o' names by this time !" But Mrs. Hutcheon, who had become an inveterate film fan since the building of a cinema in Auchencairn, had christened the child after her favourite actress. A most unsuitable name, Mrs. Crichton had thought that day she had gone to see the baby for the first time, and she had had misgivings even then when Mrs. Hutcheon grinned up

at her and said: "This ane 'll be a maidie some time, I hope. The last sister . . . "

All through Norma's childhood Mrs. Crichton had thought about this, wondering if the day would ever come when she would have the sleekit little brat as a domestic. For Norma was sleekit. There was no other word for it. The other sisters, whatever their various and individual faults, were honest and above-board. But Norma was underhand and a thief. Knowing this, Mrs. Crichton had done her utmost to keep Agnes from marrying. She had successfully put a spoke in the wheel of all the maid's suitors, and for a long time she had thought she had managed, but Joe McIntyre had been stronger than all Mrs. Crichton's hints and warning, and after seven years Agnes had handed in her notice. "I dinna ken what we're to do," Mrs. Crichton lamented to her husband. "I've priggit and priggit wi' her, but no matter what I say she'll nae bide."

"Well, well, if the lassie wants to up tail and get married we canna do anythin' about it," Mr. Crichton said. " We maun make the best o' it, wife."

Mrs. Crichton sighed. She knew that the best would have to be Norma. Even though other maids had been available, she knew that she could not go past the last of Hutcheon's daughters. Norma was nineteen now, and she had been in several jobs already. She had been maid to young Mrs. Moyes of the Barns of Dallow, but she had stayed there only a term. She had told people that the work was too heavy and that Mrs. Moyes expected too much, but there was a rumour that Mrs. Moyes had missed too many pairs of silk stockings and other articles. Then Norma had joined the A.T.S., but she had been put out of that. She said it was because of a weak heart, but different other stories went round the countryside. "If she'd said because o' a weak head," Mrs. Stormont, one of the cottar women said, "Begod, I'd ha'e believed that quick enough!"

For, added to her other faults, Norma was simple. She was quite a pretty girl, but she had a vacant look. She was always giggling and putting up her hand to her mouth. And she was a dirty slut. She never bothered to tidy herself, except when she went to Auchencairn to the pictures. In the house she shambled about all day in her dust-cap and a huge pair of felt slippers. At eleven o'clock at night she would be found crouching in front of the dying kitchen fire, still wearing her dust-cap, writing letters.

She wrote and received a lot of letters. "Norma's fan mail,"

Mr. Crichton called them. "Who the hell does she get to write to ?" he often asked his wife.

"Oh, she's got dozens of boy-friends. God knows where she gets them all." Mrs. Crichton puffed with exasperation. "I whiles wish some o' them would come here and see her sittin' like a craw nancy in front o' that fire. I wonder if they'd be sae keen on writin' to her then?"

Norma's amours were a continual source of interest not only to Mrs. Crichton but to many others on the farm. Norma could not keep from telling everybody and asking their opinion about the merits of this swain or that. This infuriated Mrs. Crichton, and she said: "The quaen's a feckless jade. It's a wonder to me that the lads put up wi' her. I ken if I was a lad I widna be havin' my name bandied about like that by her or any other glaikit limmer."

But Norma had no sense. "Tammy doon at the Mains is after me noo," Mrs. Crichton heard her say one morning to two of the cottar-women, who were waiting for milk at the byre-door. "I wonder what I should dae? I'm nae terrible keen on him, but . . . he's a nice kind o' childe . . . "

"Has he speired ye yet, Norma?" asked Mrs. Stormont.

"No, nae yet," Norma giggled. "But he's goin' to. I ken by the way he carries on."

"Mercy, quaen, ye'd think ye'd had a lot o' experience," Mrs. Dickie said, winking at Mrs. Stormont.

"Well, so I ha'e!" Norma giggled again.

"What aboot yon soldier-laddie you met last week at the dance?" Mrs. Stormont said. "I thought ye were keen on him."

"Och, him!" Norma gave her head a toss. "I'm for nae mair ado wi' him. He was tryin' to set me off against Biddy Smith at the Mains, and I'm for nane o' that."

"Well, what aboot the sailor ye were goin' to get engaged to ?"

"I dinna ken." Norma put her hand up coyly to her weak mouth. "He's a bit ower serious for me."

"But they're better to be serious than the other way," Mrs. Dickie said.

"Och, I dinna ken," Norma tittered.

"I dinna ken what to make o' that maidie, John," Mrs. Crichton said to her husband that evening. "She's really nae wice. There she was standin' gawpin' and gigglin' while thae two cottar-wifies took a loan o' her. I fairly had to bawl at her to make her shift. She was

leanin' against the byre-door as though fire widna lift her."

"I wish fire would lift her in the mornins," Mr. Crichton grumbled. "She's that damned slow. She widna run even though a mole was howkin' its way up her arse."

"Really, John! There's nae need to be sae vulgar aboot it," Mrs. Crichton said. She clicked her knitting-needles viciously. "I'm fair worried aboot her. She's the last sister, mind. I dinna ken what we're to do for a maidie if she gings."

"I whiles think she'd be better to ging," Crichton said, puffing his pipe moodily. "The other Hutcheon lassies were nae bother ava. But this ane! I dinna ken what's come ower the young lassies nowadays. They have respect for neither man nor beast. This mornin' when I asked that limmer, Norma, why my breakfast wasna ready in time she had the cheek to say: 'Well, why do ye nae come and boil the bloody kettle yersel'?"

"Agnes would never have said that," he said morosely.

"None o' them would ha'e said it," his wife said. "They kenned better than talk like that to their betters. I canna see why Agnes had to go and get married after a' thae years."

"Well, well, I suppose the lassie felt the urge like everybody else," Mr. Crichton said, switching on the wireless.

"I never thought she was the marryin' kind," Mrs. Crichton said. "If I had kenned she was for leavin' I would ha'e lookit for another maidie long syne; I widna ha'e put up wi' that Norma and her daft capers."

Her needles clicked irritably in time with Oscar Rabin and his Band. "It would be awfa to have to train a new maidie after all thae years," she said. "And she'd be sure to follow the rest and get married afore long."

"Ach, there's time enough to worry aboot that when Norma ups and gives notice," Mr. Crichton said.

But despite all her boy friends, Norma never seemed to get any nearer to matrimony. Mrs. Crichton soon lost count of her sweethearts. There were always letters from new ones. "Ye canna blame the lads for stoppin' writin' to her," Mrs. Crichton said. "That slow, soft way she has o' speakin' would drive ony man to drink. And that face o' hers — faith, I ken it's bonnie enough, but it's got as much expression as a cow's hint end."

"A cow's hint end has often more," Mr. Crichton said.

When she wasn't crouched in front of the fire, writing letters,

Norma would spread all her photographs on the large kitchen table and pore over them. She wrote to all her favourite male film stars, enclosing postage, for their photographs; and she had photos of all her boy friends. "I dinna ken which is worse," Mrs. Crichton lamented. "Whether it's waur to see her moonin' like a sick cow over thae photos or whether it's better to see her wi' that writing-pad on her knee. Every time I see her gettin' it out, I feel like screamin'. I only wish she was as keen on scrubbin' as she is on writin'. Ye should see the blethers she writes, too!"

Norma was not content with writing the letters; she had to show them to somebody else before she sent them off. And Mrs. Crichton was usually that somebody. Night after night Norma would insist upon reading over what she had written. "Now, do ye think that's all right?" she would say. "If I say that, do ye think he'll ken what I mean? Or do ye think I should say this?"

"As if it mattered what she said!" Mrs. Crichton said to her husband or whoever else would listen to her. "She just gets an answer frae them once or twice, and then they stop writin'. Not that Norma seems to care. She's got new fowk to write to by that time. Faith, it beats me what the men see in her. They've never seen her in that dust-cap or else the game would be up."

But apparently Norma did not think this. Slatternly dressed though she was at all hours of the day, she was continually going out of her way to ogle any man. She waved and shouted out of the windows to the farm-hands, and they were always chaffing her. If she had not been so exasperated, Mrs. Crichton would have been amused at all the trouble Norma took. She would slither frantically in her large slippers from the front room where she was making a bed to the stair-window to lean out and shout: "Ay there, Wullie!" or "Ay ay, Geordie, what a cauld mornin'!"

Most of the farm-hands were safely married, so nothing was thought of their harmless chaffing of Norma. But things took a different turn when three hefty young Irish labourers came to the Mill of Burnhill at the May term. By this time Norma had been with the Crichtons for a year, and Mrs. Crichton's fears about her leaving them had died down. She realised that there was nothing in Norma's letters and photographs, and so she worried more about her other faults, which were many. And she worried especially about her habit of petty pilfering.

But the coming of the Irishmen restarted all the old fears about

Norma being the last sister. The Irishmen were bachelors, or said they were, and they lived in the bothy at the back of the steading. This bothy had been a stable, but some years ago Mr. Crichton had converted it into a dwelling-house for his unmarried men. A regular pigstye of a place at the best of times, it rapidly became worse by the time the Irishmen had been in it for a few weeks. Every time she passed the open door, Mrs. Crichton's nose wrinkled with digust, and she complained bitterly to her husband. "Can ye nae make them clean it up, John?" she said. "It's a fair scunner. I'm sure they could easy take a brush to the floor and gi'e the windows a bit dicht now and then."

"It's nane o' my business, wife," he said. " I pay them for workin' in my fields. They can live like pigs for all I care, so long as they do their work."

"If ye're sae keen on cleanliness," he said. " Why do ye nae send that limmer Norma ower wi' a brush and pail? She could easy gi'e the place a bit red up."

"Ay, and maybe get red up hersel' into the bargain," Mrs. Crichton said. "No, no, she's nae settin' foot inside that bothy. If she ever does, I'll have to know the reason why. I widna trust thae Irish loons as far as I could throw them. And I certainly widna trust Norma wi' them."

"I widna trust Norma wi' anything," she added.

The bothy-lads gave Mrs. Crichton a sad time of it. They borrowed her towels and crockery, they demanded sheets and blankets, and they calmly proceeded either to break or dirty them all. "My guid bath-towels that I got frae yer sister, Bess, for our Silver Wedding!" she lamented. "My faith, ye should see the colour o' them now! I was past that bothy this afternoon and there they were, lyin' at the door, draped a' ower the auld horse-trough, and the colour o' a dirty kitchen grate. When I think that I've kept them bye a' thae years in the cupboard, to let thae filthy Irishers make them look like dish-cloots . . . "

The Irishmen did not care what they said or did, because they had no fixed roots in the neighbourhood. Knowing they were transient, they went to great lengths in larking with the local girls, and simple Norma was easy bait for them. Every night when they came to the back-door to collect their cans of milk Norma nearly broke her neck rushing to greet them.

"Sure now, you're the loveliest girl this side of the Shannon, Norma me darlin'," one of them was saying one evening when Mrs. Crichton came into the scullery.

"Och now, Paddy McShane, ye're just kiddin' me," Norma giggled.

"Kiddin' ye, is it!" Paddy made a mournful face. "Sure now, you would be knowin' me better than that, surely. It's destroyed I am entirely for the love of ye."

"Well, destroy yourself quick and get awa' home out o' here," Mrs. Crichton cut in. "Takin' a rise out o' a decent girl ! Ye should be ashamed o' yourself."

Paddy glowered, but he said nothing. He had already felt the rough edge of Mrs. Crichton's tongue. He was a tall, loose-limbed blonde youth, and he might have been termed handsome except that he shambled rather than walked, and he was always dirty.

"Come now, Norma, get on wi' the tatties and stop standin' there like a sick heifer," Mrs. Crichton ordered.

"Isn't Paddy McShane a smasher," Norma said, picking up a knife and starting to peel a potato in a desultory fashion. "I could go for that fella in a big way."

"If ye do, I'll go for you in an even bigger way," Mrs. Crichton snapped. "Wi' Mr. Crichton's big walking-stick!"

As the weeks went past Mrs. Crichton sensed rather than saw that an intimacy had sprung up between Paddy and Norma. Try though she did, she could never catch them together, unless in the most innocent way, and so she could not pin them down to anything. And then one night she found Paddy in the kitchen. And not only Paddy. The other two bothy-louts were standing in the doorway, and they grinned uneasily and backed outside when they saw her. But Paddy held his ground. He shifted his thighs lazily from their half-seat on the table and said: "Good evening to ye, Mrs. Crichton, we were after askin' Norma here if we could be gettin' the use of a couple more pots. Sure now, the last ones ye gave us are so full of holes that they can be holdin' nothing in them."

"So it's pots you want now, is it?" cried Mrs. Crichton. "I thought that a tink like yourself would be able to mend the ones ye've got. Do ye think I keep an ironmongery here to be supplying ye all the time for nothing?"

After they had gone with two old pots that Mrs. Crichton had used to boil her hens' meat in, she turned on Norma and said: "If those stinkin' tinks set one foot inside this kitchen again, Norma Hutcheon, I'll give ye such a flytin' that your ears 'll ring for weeks afterwards."

"I didna ask them in," Norma whined. "I'm nae keen on their company. I'd rather be on my lone wi' the cat than listen to their daft Irish tongues."

But a few nights later Mrs. Crichton found Paddy in the kitchen again. And then she knew what everybody else on the farm but herself had known for weeks. Paddy and Norma were courting. "Ay, the Irish loon is sleevin' Norma," Mr. Crichton said when tackled. "I hear tell that they're gettin' marriet in the spring."

"And who told ye that?" Mrs. Crichton cried.

"Geordie the cattler. He heard tell from one o' the other Irish childes."

"Gordie the cattler should mind his own business, "Mrs. Crichton snapped. "Startin' up a rumour like that! Before we ken where we are that glaikit limmer will be givin' in her notice."

"And what 'll I do then ?" she wailed.

She determined to put a spoke in Norma's wheel in exactly the same way as she had tried with Agnes. And to do this she attempted to enlist the aid of Mrs. Hutcheon and of Agnes herself. If they had not lived so far away, she would have tried to get the sympathy and help of the other sisters, too. In fact, she did think of going the twenty-three miles to Inverbervie to visit Bella, but she couldn't persuade Mr. Crichton to drive her there.

Mrs. Hutcheon was not much help. "Och, I dinna see what harm there is in it," she said. "If Norma wants to ha'e the loon, let her ha'e him. We've a' got to get marriet sometime."

"But he's a filthy orra tink," Mrs. Hutcheon cried. "Ye widna want your daughter to marry a pig o' an Irisher, would ye? Have ye seen the stir him and the others ha'e that bothy in? The stink would knock ye doon a mile away."

"That'll nae worry Norma ava," Mrs. Hutcheon said placidly.

"Faith, I know that," Mrs. Crichton said. "She and that Irish tink are a well-met pair. I dinna ken how decent fowk like yersel' and Hutcheon ever managed to ha'e such a gormless goose. And surely you and he widna want a Papish for a son-in-law?"

"Och, me and Hutcheon widna worry ower much aboot that," said Mrs. Hutcheon. "We're nae what ye might ca' kirk-goers ourselves."

"Ay, I ken that," Mrs. Crichton said.

She did not get any more sympathy when she called upon Agnes. That young woman still remembered Mrs. Crichton's compaign to

prevent her from marrying her own Joe. She said: "I doot the best thing ye can dae, Mrs. Crichton, is to start lookin' for another maidie. I hear that wee Jessie Stormont 'll be leavin' the school soon. If I wis you, I'd put in a word for her."

"Ay, and ha'e that mother o' hers aye sittin' in ma kitchen, drinkin' tea and gossipin'!" Mrs. Crichton cried. "No, no, before it comes to that I'll apply to an agency."

But she did not need to do that, because a few days later something happened to stop the intimacy between Norma and Paddy.

For months Mrs. Crichton had been pestering her husband to build a fence near the back-door so that it would keep her hens from straying into the kitchen and leaving their droppings on the floor. He had remained stolidly impervious to her cajolings and pleadings, and she had reconciled herself more or less to being bothered by the hens in the same way as she had reconciled herself to the idiosyncrasies of Norma. And then one morning the bothy-lads appeared with a tractor-load of wood and, directed by Mr. Crichton with a measuring-tape, they started to hammer posts into the ground.

"Mercy on us !" Mrs. Crichton cried. "Dinna tell me this is to be my fence at last!"

Norma giggled and leaned over her shoulder to watch. "Don't fence me in!" she sang, waving to Paddy. "Let me ride through the open country that I lu-uve! Don't FENCE me in . . . "

"You ride up to the front bedroom and get that bed made," Mrs. Crichton ordered. "Or I'll give ye boots and saddles where ye'll feel them the most!"

Though she was glad to get her fence at last, Mrs. Crichton wondered, as the day wore on, whether it was worth all the bother. Norma did scarcely any work. She leaned out of the kitchen-window, shouting and giggling at the men, and whenever possible she would be outside, leaning against a post, hugging her breasts, gawping and ogling. By late afternoon Mrs. Crichton was exasperated almost beyond words. And when from an upstairs window she saw Norma take out tea to them she prepared to give battle.

"I'll warm that quaen's ears for her," she muttered, hastening down to the kitchen, lips pressed tightly. And she folded her arms and stood at the window, waiting until Norma would return with the tray and empty cups; for she was determined not to upbraid her before the men, knowing that her own reputation and not Norma's would be the one to suffer.

Norma sat on a barrow while the bothy-lads drank the tea. They had started to paint the fence with tar, otherwise she would probably have leaned against it.

"Sure now, and that was grand tea, Norma me darlin'," Paddy said, handing her his empty cup. "Now, off about your business, girl, while we're after gettin' on with the good work."

He picked up his brush and belaboured the virgin palings. Norma stood, hugging the tray against her waist.

"Och, what's a' the hurry?" she pouted. "I've nothin' else to do. I'll just bide here and watch ye slappin' on the tar."

"Sure and if you do, it's over yourself we might be tempted to slap it," Paddy grinned.

"I'd like to see ye try," she giggled.

"Would ye now!" he said, and he winked at the others.

"Ay, would I!" Norma tossed her head, confident of her own invulnerability. "Ye'd never hear the end o' it, Paddy McShane, if one drop o' that tar went on me."

Paddy laughed and dipped his brush into the tar-pot again. "Ye never know what might be comin' over you, me darlin'," he said. "We might not be after stoppin' at tar. We might put a few feathers, too, to make ye upsides with the other ould hens."

"Just you dare!" Norma giggled.

Mrs. Crichton, straining her ears at the window, could not hear what one of the other bothy-lads said, but she heard the roar of laughter. And then she saw Paddy flip his brush playfully at the maid.

There was a scream of rage from Norma. "Look what ye've done, ye filthy brute! Look at my clean overall!"

"Clean? It was never clean, me darlin,." Paddy laughed again. "Sure now, and you wouldn't be after tellin' us a barefaced lie, would ye?"

The youngest bothy-lad guffawed, and emboldened by Paddy's example, he flipped his brush at Norma. And then in a second they were all flipping their brushes at her, and she rushed screaming into the house.

Mrs. Crichton was so overjoyed that she did not give Norma the row she had intended; instead she sympathised with her over "thae filthy Irish tinks." And that night when Norma spread her photographs and writing-pad over the kitchen-table, she smirked with satisfaction. She was glad to see them again. There was no need

to worry any longer about the last sister leaving. A Hutcheon had aye been maid at the Mill of Burnhill, and a Hutcheon would go on being a maid there. Photographs and all!

A week later Norma announced that she was going to marry a Pole.

Mrs. Crichton was preparing to make jam. "A Pole!" she said, pouring sugar into the jelly-pan. "What Pole's this?"

"Och, it's a fella I met at a dance a while syne," Norma said. "I'd forgotten all aboot him, but he turned up at the pictures last night, and he's askit me to marry him. I might as well."

"Norma Hutcheon, are ye in yer right senses?" Mrs. Crichton cried. "Do you mean to stand there and tell me in cold blood that you're goin' to marry *a Pole?*"

"Ay, and what for no?" Norma said. "He's a smashin' fella."

"A Pole!" Mrs. Crichton cried. "A Pole! Goad Almighty, quaen, ye winna be able to understand what he's talkin' aboot."

"Ach, I ken fine what he's talkin' aboot," Norma said. "And, onywye, we widna aye be talkin'." And she sniggered lewdly.

All morning Mrs. Crichton argued with her while they made the jam, but Norma said her mind was made up. "I'm for leavin'," she said.

"And when may I ask is the great event to take place?" Mrs. Crichton said, thinking that perhaps sarcasm might work where all other methods had failed.

"Well, Alexei wants me to marry him next week," Norma said.

"Next week!" Mrs. Crichton almost spilled the jam she was pouring into glass jars. "Nert week! But ye winna be able to get marriet by that time. It's ower short notice. What am I to do? Who's to help me here in this big hoose on my lone? Who's to help me wi' Mr. Crichton?"

"I dinna ken," Norma said. " And what's more, I dinna care."

"But the ceremony 'll be in Polish," Mrs. Crichton said. "Ye'll nae be able to understand one word o' it. Not one word."

"I dinna care," Norma said. "I'm for marryin' him, and it would take more than you to stop me, ye interferin' auld bitch."

There was a long silence.

Mrs. Crichton replaced the jelly-pan on the range. "Norma Hutcheon," she said slowly," I've put up wi' a lot for your father's and mother's sakes and for the sakes o' yer sisters — nice lassies — decent quaens every one o' them — but I winna stand any more o'

yer impiddence. Ging upstairs and pack yer kist. You leave this house this very night."

"Even if I've to do without a maidie," she said, turning her back.

Half an hour later Norma pranced downstairs, dressed in her Sunday clothes. "I'll awa' and get ane o' the tractor-boys to lift my kist," she said. "I'm damned if I'm humphin' it along to our house."

Mrs. Crichton did not answer. She was stirring another panful of jam. And other things had been stirring in her mind during the time Norma had been upstairs. Already Mrs. Crichton had counted and recounted the rows of jars of newly-made jam. She was sure that two were missing.

She watched Norma mince in her too-high heels across the steading, walking in a roundabout way to avoid the tractor-wheel ruts. Then she pressed her lips together and went upstairs to Norma's room.

The maid's trunk stood in the middle of the floor. Mrs. Crichton gave a quick look out of the window before she tried the handle of the trunk. It was unlocked. She lifted the lid.

The missing two pots of jam were standing on top of the clothes.

Mrs. Crichton bared her upper teeth for a second, then she tore off the paper-coverings and lifted the jars upside down so that the jam fell in a thick sticky mess over the entire contents of the trunk. Then she replaced the lid and went downstairs.

THREE POEMS BY VILLON

Translated by Norman Cameron

VILLON'S EPITAPH

Men, brothers whom we shall not see again,
Let not your hearts towards us be unkind;
For if you pity us poor men and plain,
God's mercy unto you will be inclin'd.
Here you behold some six of us alin'd.
Our flesh, that we did all too well supply,
Did long since shrivel up and putrefy,
And we, the bones, to dust and ashes fall.
Let none make sport of our adversity,
But pray to God that he forgive us all !

We call you brothers. Nay, do not disdain
The kinship, though it was by seal'd and sign'd
Mandate of law that we poor six were slain:
Not all men always are of righteous mind.
Now we are dead, we've left our sins behind;
So plead with Jesus that his charity
Towards us erring sheep may not run dry,
But save us from the flame perpetual.
We're dead, no soul torments us inwardly;
But pray to God that he forgive us all !

We have been wash'd and purified by rain;
The sun hath burnt us to a blacken'd rind;
The crows and magpies have dug out our eyen;
Eyebrows and beard are from our faces twin'd.
We have no rest: always the changing wind

Hunteth us to and fro, now low, now high.
Our skins are pitted like a strawberry
Where birds have pecked them. Ye who would forestall
Such vengeance, be not of our company,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

Jesus, who over all hast mastery,
Guard us from Satan's wicked signory:
He hath no rightful claim on us nor call.
Mankind, this is no place for mockery;
But pray to God that he forgive us all !

FRANCIS BY NAME...

Francis by name, France's by birth
(I've never had much luck on earth),
At Paris first I op'd my eyes
(It is a hamlet near Pontoise);
And soon my neck, to end the farce,
Must learn how heavy is my arse.

BALLADE

Couched in old French in the original—

E'en if it be that blessed soul,
The Pope, with alb and rosary
(Who, when he prays, must wear a stole
In which to snare the Enemy
So hot with hate and mockery),
He dies like nobleman or hind,
Out of this world puff'd suddenly:
Such stuff is carried down the wind.

Gold-fisted soldans who control
Constantinople's empery;
Or he of France, whom we extol
Above all others' monarchy;
Who, in his godly piety
Churches and convents hath design'd:
If they in life had majesty,
Such stuff is carried down the wind.

Be't Dauphins of Vienne, Grenobles,
In battle bold, in council sly,
Lords of Dijon, Salins and Dole,
The sires and eldest progency;
Or be't their trains of chivalry —
Stout men-at-arms who've drunk and din'd,
Trumpeters, heralds, yeomanry:
Such stuff is carried down the wind.

Princes, you too are doom'd to die,
With all the rest of humankind.
If ye are vex'd or griev'd thereby,
Such stuff is carried down the wind.

Award Winners, 1950-1951

Fiction:

DOROTHY ROBERTS

(For *Hunger*, in our issue for April-May 1951)

and

HUGH GARNER

(For *The Conversion of Willie Heaps*, in our issue for Feb.-Mar., 1951)

(Prize Divided)

Dorothy Roberts, who was born in Fredericton, New Brunswick, is the daughter of the writer, Theodore Goodridge Roberts, and the sister of the painter, Goodridge Roberts. She is now living in State College, Pennsylvania. Poems which she wrote during her teens, under the name of "Gostwick Roberts", appeared in English, Canadian and American periodicals, and some of them were included in the *Oxford Book of Canadian Verse* and in *Poems Worth Knowing.* During the 1930's and '40's, short stories by Dorothy Roberts were published in *Chatelaine* and the *Toronto Star Weekly,* and in numerous English magazines.

Hugh Garner was born in England in 1913, but he has made his home in Toronto for many years. His career as a writer involved a long period of frustration and rejection slips, before his novel, *Storm Below,* appeared in 1949. It was followed by *Cabbagetown,* a novel which was rejected six times before its eventual publication but which has since sold some eighty-thousand copies in Canada. Mr. Garner's stories have appeared in many magazines, including *The Canadian Forum, Chatelaine, MacLean's, New Liberty* and *National Home Monthly,* and a number of them have been broadcast on the CBC programme, *Canadian Short Stories.*

Poetry:

LOUIS DUDEK

(For *Three Poems*, in our issue for Aug-Sept., 1951)

After living for several years in the United States, *Louis Dudek* has recently returned to Montreal where he is teaching literature at McGill. He is one of the best-known of the younger poets whose work first began to attract attention in the early forties. His poems have appeared in *First Statement,* a magazine which he helped to edit for a time, and more recently in *Contemporary Verse, Voices, Poetry Commonwealth, Poetry New York* and *Imagi.* In 1946 a book of his poems, entitled *East of the City,* was brought out by the Ryerson Press.

BOOKS

ROMAN READER, edited by Basil Davenport. Macmillan. 656 pages. $2.95.

This handy collection of translated passages provides a very good introduction to the chief figures of Roman literature. Covering seven centuries of copious production, the editor had to be selective. He chose to confine himself to the best-known names, and offer fairly substantial portions of their work. The dramatists are represented by complete plays, the greater poets by complete books, or whole poems, the prose writers by continuous passages of some length. One regrets the lack of much charming and even brilliant minor work; but the plan adopted probably gives the reader both more pleasure and more instruction than a wider range of snippets.

The translations chosen range from the seventeenth century to our own day. Plautus is adequately handled, Terence admirably; Lucretius appears in the best verse translation to date. Virgil fares least well; but the best version of the Aeneid, that of Rolfe Humphries, appeared only this year. Yet it may be doubted if among the available translators anyone ever did a worse job than Longfellow, though Conington and Morris are not much more Virgilian; all three appear here. But perhaps readers may be stimulated to say, 'No one with Virgil's reputation can have been quite as bad as this,' and will begin to investigate for themselves. Except for Terence, the poets are all given in verse; a wise choice and a wise exception. We expect prose in realistic comedy; but elsewhere any tolerably good verse translation comes closer to the poet's intention and effect than more pedantically accurate prose; anyone who really wants to know what the poet said will take the trouble to learn his language. Except for the Petronius, which comes off well, the prose writers fare less happily than the poets. Their meaning is rendered, but their brilliance and personality disappear. Indeed, there are very few adequate English versions, even in part, of the great works of Latin prose, one of the most brilliant, versatile, and expressive forms of literary composition ever employed by man.

In the choice of selections, a good case could be made out for all the passages included; probably anyone familiar with the literature will

feel that a better case might sometimes have been made for others, but that is the common hazard of anthologies. The guiding principle of selection is to exhibit "the culture of the Roman State". This is rightly held to embody Rome's chief importance to mankind; but the terms are not so narrowly interpreted as to lose sight of the individual Roman and his neighbors. Indeed, one can easily think of a number of passages more directly germane to the main interest — Lucretius' fifth book, Virgil's sixth, Cicero's, Sallust's, Seneca's essays on the theory and practice of government, that have been omitted in favor of material dealing with private life and general literary interests.

The introductory notes to the four sections are brief, informative, and sensible. The judgments incline to be sweeping and conventional, but a largely uninformed general public needs the broad lines firmly drawn first. Refinements and corrections can come later, when, to cite an instance from the introduction, readers have realised that the death of Julius Caesar did not occur "towards the end of the Roman Empire".

L. A. MacKay

TO OUR READERS

For the second time we are approaching our readers with a request for donations. Last year's appeal met with a very generous response, and we hope you will give us your support again. As you know, the publication of a Canadian literary magazine is in the nature of an act of faith, and the survival of Northern Review depends to an unusual extent on the cooperation of its readers. We *must* obtain our fund objective if the magazine is to continue to appear.

The objective for this year's fund is $1500, and a list of contributions already received appears below. There is a remainder of $354 still to be obtained. If you believe that a magazine devoted to contemporary writing and criticism has a function to perform in Canada, we hope you will help us by contributing to the guarantors' fund.

The Editors

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